

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BELGRA 04284 01 OF 02 251143Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----087040 251146Z /41
O R 251100Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1192
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 4284

EXDIS

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: MASS YO ET US PFOR
SUBJ: ALLEGED YUGOSLAV TRANSFER OF M-47 TANKS TO ETHIOPIA

REF: (A) BELGRADE 4263(NOTAL), (B) BELGRADE 4252, (C) STATE 146935,
(D) BELGRADE 4238, (E) STATE 145552, (F) BELGRADE 3751

1. THIS CABLE WAS SUMMARIZED BY REF A.
2. AS INSTRUCTED I CALLED ON FONSEC MINIC AT 1:15 PM FRIDAY, JUNE 24, ONLY TIME IN NEXT SEVERAL DAYS HE WOULD PURPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SEE ME. IT BEING OUR INITIAL CONTACT, I BRIEFLY CALLED TO MINIC'S ATTENTION REMARKS I HAD MADE DURING EARLIER CALL ON MOJSOV RE MY HOPES TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS AND INTENT TO APPROACH GOY IN SPIRIT OF CANDOR AND COOPERATION. MINIC INDICATED HE HAD BEEN FULLY BRIEFED BY MOJSOV. WISHING NOT TO UNDULY DELAY ADDRESSING CAUSE FOR WHICH MEETING REQUESTED I INFORMED MINIC I HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO RAISE WITH HIM URGENTLY A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

3. MINIC AT THAT POINT INTERJECTED RATHER LENGTHY RESPONSE TO MY OPENING COMMENTS, ASSURING ME OF FSFA'S COOPERATION AND THAT OF ALL OTHER YUGOSLAV ORGANS AND INSTITUTIONS WITH WHICH I MIGHT DEAL. NOTING IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING HIGH-LEVEL

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BILATERAL TALKS, MINIC COMMENTED THAT "EACH SIDE PROCEEDS FROM ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS", ADDING, PAST HAS SHOWN "EFFORTS TO IMPOSE ONE SIDE'S POSITION ON ANOTHER NEVER WORKS". HE SAID GOY HAS LONG STRIVED "TO GET YOUR GOVERNMENT TO UNDERSTAND US AND NOT TO CHANGE US, BECAUSE IT CAN'T BE DONE".

4. PROCEEDING THEN TO SUBJECT OF APPARENT M-47 TRANSFERS, I

MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

--ON INSTRUCTIONS OF MY GOVERNMENT I WAS APPROACHING GOY ON MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. USG HAS INFORMATION THAT M-47 TANKS SUPPLIED BY THE USG TO YUGOSLAVIA UNDER MAP HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA.

--IF THIS TRANSFER HAS IN FACT TAKEN PLACE, IT IS APPARENT THAT IT IS A VIOLATION OF BILATERAL UNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN THE USG AND GOY WHICH REQUIRE THE CONSENT OF THE USG TO SUCH A TRANSFER BEFORE IT CAN TAKE PLACE.

--I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASK THE GOY IF IT CAN CONFIRM THAT M-47 TANKS OBTAINED FROM THE USG HAVE BEEN IN FACT TRANSFERRED TO ETHIOPIA.

5. IN CONCLUDING MY STATEMENT, I ACKNOWLEDGED MY HAVING RAISED THE ISSUE WITHOUT WARNING AND SAID I DID NOT EXPECT MINIC TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE ANSWER, BUT THAT I HOPED FOR A REPLY SOON.

6. MINIC RESPONDED WITH LENGTHY, ALBEIT GENERALISTIC, DESCRIPTION OF GOY POLICY TOWARD ETHIOPIA AND GOY'S PERCEPTION OF CURRENT SITUATION IN THAT COUNTRY. HE MADE, INTER ALIA, FOLLOWING POINTS:

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--SINCE "REVOLUTIONARY REGIME" CAME TO POWER IN ETHIOPIA GOY HAS EXTENDED TO IT ECONOMIC AID AND, "WITHIN THE LIMITS OF ITS ABILITY", MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

--"I CANNOT GIVE A PRECISE ANSWER ON TYPES OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE RENDERED". SUCH "DETAILS" ARE WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF DEFENSE MINISTRY. "YOUR STATEMENT HAS BEEN NOTED AND YOU WILL BE PROVIDED WITH A RESPONSE", HE SAID.

--GOY VIEWS HORN OF AFRICA AS "HOTBED OF POTENTIAL WAR" IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO ANOTHER SUCH "HOTBED", I.E. MIDDLE EAST, "WHICH IS NOT NEAR A SOLUTION EITHER".

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ACTION SS-25

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-----087251 251223Z /41
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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1193
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BELGRADE 4284

EXDIS

--GOY HAS HAD LITTLE SUCCESS TO DATE INSEEKING TO INFLUENCE
COUNTRIES OF THE REGION TO SOLVE PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY.

--"I MUST TEL YOU FRANKLY WE DONT UNDERSTAND WHY OUR
ARAB FRIENDS HAVE ALLOWED SUCH A DETERIORATION IN THEIR
RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA".

--GOY "KNOWS" ETHIOPIA WISHES TO ADHERE TO NON-ALIGNED POSITION.
"THST IS THE ONLY REASON THEY HAVE APPEALED TO YUGOSLAVIA FOR ARMS".
--GOY'S MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN "MODEST".

--GOY HAS "NO INTENT TO CHANGE"ITS POLICY TOWARD ETHIOPIA.

--THOUGH GOY OFFERS ADVICE TO ETHIOPIA, LATTER "DOES NOT
ALWAYS ACCEPT OUR ADVICE", E.G., THAT IT GRANT FEDERAL STATUS
TO ERITREA. TITO HAS ON TWO OCCASIONS ADVISED ETHIOPIA TO
GRANT ERITREA FEDERAL STATUS IN ORDER BOTH TO SOLVE ITS MOST
PRESSING INTERNAL PROBLEM AND TO DISCOURAGE EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE.
GOY BELIEVES ETHIOPIA WILL BE FORCED TO BY EVENTS TO FIND POLITICAL
SOLUTION TO ERITREA, AS MILITARY SOLUTION SIMPLY NOT POSSIBLE.
ERITREAN LEADERS, HOWEVER, ARE STRIVING FOR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE,
AND BY ARMS ALONE, WHICH ALSO IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ATTAIN.
--GOY'S "ONLY AIM IS TO ASSIST ETHIOPIA IN PRESERVING ITS
NON-ALIGNED STATUS, TO TRY TO HELP IT SOLVE ITS INTERNAL
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PROBLEMS, THAT IS, ERITREA, AN D TO BRING SIDES TOGETHER TO LIVE
IN PEACE WITH THEIR ARAB NEIGHBORS....IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT
GOY ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN EXTENDED."

7. I THANKED MINIC FOR HIS COMMENTS, AND THEN SAID THAT U.S.
IN NO WAY SEEKS INVOLVE ITSELF IN YUGOSLAV-ETHIOPIAN RELATONS--
THAT IS THEIR BUSINESS. I NOTED THAT WHILE WE MAY DIFFER ON
PROPER MEANS, WE BOTH SHARED DESIRE THAT PROBLEMS IN THE HORN
BE SETTLED PEACEFULLY. BUT, I SAID, TRANSFER OF M-47 TANKS

IS ANOTHER MATTER; IT IS, CLEARLY, A BILATERAL QUESTION INVOLVING AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES--A QUESTION THAT LOOMS AS A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM BEFORE US. I REITERATED THAT I MUST HAVE AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION I HAD POSED.

8. STATING "I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING TO YOU NOW", MINIC AGAIN ASSURED ME A RESPONSE WOULD BE FORTHCOMING.

9. COMMENT: MINIC WAS (DESPITE ALL THE WARNINGS I HAD RECEIVED HERE ABOUT HOW COLD AND TOUGH HE IS) BOTH FRIENDLY AND MODERATE IN HIS COMMENTS. THAT MAY BE BECAUSE HE WANTED US TO START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT, OR BECAUSE MY CHARM OVERWHELMED HIM. BUT I TEND TO DOUBT IT. HIS LENGTHY EXPLANATION OF YUGOSLAVIA'S INTERESTS IN HELPING THE NEW ETHIOPIAN REGIME--PLUS THE GENTLE TONE--SEEMED TO BE A POSSIBLE INDICATION THAT HE KNEW YUGOSLAVIA HAD BEEN CAUGHT WITH ITS HAND IN THE COOKIE JAR. HE WAS ANXIOUS BOTH TO PUT INTO CONTEXT REASONS FOR THEIR ACTIONS AND PREPARE THE ROAD FOR WHATEVER MIGHT FOLLOW.

10. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT WHEN I REEMPHASIZED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ISSUE TO A SUBORDINATE OFFICIAL AS WE WERE WALKING OUT OF THE MINISTRY, HE COMMENTED THAT IT WAS OFTEN VERY HARD FOR THE FOREIGN SECRETARIAT TO FIND SECRET

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OUT FROM DEFENSE WHAT WAS GOING ON. NONETHELESS, I SUSPECT THAT MINIC KNOWS, EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE IN THE SECRETARIAT DOES.

11. RECOGNIZING THE DANGER OF PREDICTION, I NEVERTHELESS AM WILLING TO BET THAT WHEN THE GOY RESPONDS IT WILL BE IN THE NEGATIVE. IN ANY EVENT, WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WE DO IN SUCH A CONTINGENCY. MY CURRENT RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE THAT-- SHOULD THEY DENY THE TRANSFER--WE GO IN AGAIN, AFTER A REASONABLE TIME FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE YUGOSLAV RESPONSE, AND SAY THAT OUR INFORMATION CLEARLY ESTABLISHES (IF IN FACT IT DOES*) THAT THE GOY HAS MADE THE TRANSFER, AND THEN DESCRIBE THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH MUST, BY LAW, FOLLOW.

EAGLEBURGER

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